

## NATHAN KANE

In the slow unravelling of his life, from introverted child to reclusive teenager, Nathan Kane had retreated from view. This day, forced to a drab and depressing courthouse to hear his uncle sentenced for rape, he contemplated the pinnacle of a part-mapped existence, as significant to him as the grit under his fingernails.

Briony was nineteen and had been Nathan's girlfriend at the time; a relationship that had shifted and was now in question. He had heard rumours around town: Briony had asked for it; she had got drunk and deserved it; that his uncle Davey was beyond such things. For Nathan it was simple, this one-time bystander on his broken odyssey had derailed.

One year ago almost to the day, before the rape, Nathan had taken Briony walking, up high to the rock that looked down over the bay and the fishing boats that cast oyster nets. Patches of green field, stitched together by stone walls, draped the rock and seeped into the frayed edges of the ocean.

On the other side of the vast expanse of empty water was a land of wealth and opportunity. In this part of Ireland, on the south west coast, they still saw it that way. Even when they didn't need to leave anymore and you could buy Converse in the Saturday market, it still beckoned - still hooked a gnarled and crooked finger across the Atlantic. That's what he told Briony anyway, and then felt stupid when she laughed, her smile hidden behind hair cut across her face by the wind; strands he wanted to pull from her lips and kiss.

The smell of ozone was still in his hair that evening, his fingers full of her perfume as he picked up his uncle's phone which had come into his possession for a while. He scoured through the photos stored there. They were of Briony - as she

left the house, or as she walked down the footpath towards the sea, or sat on the stone wall to wait for him. They were almost exclusively a collection of close-ups of her body parts: her knee or the rise in her breast, the spread of her hand or the soft crease of her ear. Nathan had nervously fingered the images as though disturbing vital clues in an investigation. A few of them he decided to hold on to and sent them from his uncle's phone to his.

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